

Small Block
704 North Milwaukee Street
Milwaukee
Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-259

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. WIS-259

SMALL BLOCK

Location: 704 North Milwaukee Street (formerly 406-408 Milwaukee Street; east side of North Milwaukee between East Wisconsin Avenue and East Mason Street), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Present Owner: Irving Luntz

Present Occupants: Ground floor, north side---south portion of Miss Hixon shop, Hixons East (women's apparel shop); ground floor, south side---Dreyer-Meyer Corset Shop; second story---John's Beauty Studio, Ben Springer, and a portion of the Irving Galleries' frame shop; third floor-vacant.

Present Use: Shops and offices

Statement of Significance: Built in 1866, this Italianate business block is one of the older buildings remaining in downtown Milwaukee and is one of a group of commercial blocks, all erected in the 1860s and 1870s, which stand along the east side of North Milwaukee Street between Wisconsin Avenue and Mason Street.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The stone plate on the facade gives the date "1866." On June 19, 1866, the Milwaukee Sentinel reported that Small intended to build on his Milwaukee Street property, and by November of the same year, the first tenants had moved into the new building. According to the Sentinel, Small's block cost \$15,000.
2. Architect: Not recorded. Small's building may have been designed by Milwaukee's Edward Townsend Mix, who transferred his offices to 408 Milwaukee Street in February 1867.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The structure was erected for Simeon N. Small, who had owned the lot since January 1, 1862. In 1874, Benjamin K. Miller, trustee for the then bankrupt Small, sold the building to Judah M. Lawrence. It remained in the Lawrence family until 1917, when George Lawrence sold it to the heirs of Amos

J. W. Pierce. In 1918 ownership passed to the Pierce family firm--the A. J. W. Pierce Realty Co., from whom the present owner purchased it in November 1967.

4. Builders and suppliers: Not recorded. The contractor may have been Sherburne Bryant, who was involved in the construction of another commercial block for Small during the decade following the Civil War.
5. Original plans: None
6. Alterations and additions: Those recorded by building permits include:
 - a. 1899 (No. 4212): Permit to build a hollow sidewalk at 406-408 Milwaukee for J. M. Lorenz /sic/, owner, by H. J. Rotier, architect, and Ernst Winter, builder. The cost was to be \$400.
 - b. 1917 (No. 8433): For Samuel Pierce, by Ellis and Coogan, contractors, to cut openings on the second and third stories between the present building and the one adjoining it on the south. The project was to cost \$500 and was finished by November 1917.
 - c. 1918 (No. 908): New partitions were set on the second floor at the cost of \$500. The contractors were Ellis and Coogan, and the job was completed in May 1918.
 - d. 1919 (No. 2507): Unspecified changes in the store front were made in April and May 1919, by Ellis and Coogan, builders, at the cost of \$360.
 - e. 1919-20 (No. 18812): The permit records a \$3,000 project of alterations to the third story by Ellis and Coogan's firm. The work involved setting new partitions and repairing the roof, which had been damaged by fire, and was complete in February 1920.
 - f. 1922 (No. 2389): Ellis and Coogan were again employed to alter partitions on the second story, work finished in March 1922.
 - g. 1941 (No. 1234): H. Schmitt and Son, Inc., contractors, were retained to set partitions in the basement and to erect dressing booths on the ground story. Cost of the project was estimated at \$800, and it was finished by mid-February 1941.

- h. 1946 (No. 6638): Between May and August the north portion of the ground floor was altered by A.J. Lederer, contractor, at the cost of \$1,300. The task involved changes in the front and interior and relocation of a stairway to the basement.
- i. 1950 (Nos. 41487, 56179, 57094, 57099): All these permits of September-November 1950, relate to changes in the south portion of the ground story, occupied by the Dreyer-Meyer Corset Shop. The store front was significantly altered, the ceiling lowered, and new outlets and fixtures installed. Contractors included the Dahlman Construction Co., Knoerr and Fischer, Inc., and the Everbrite Electric Service Co.
- j. 1959 (No. 267747): An opening was cut in the first story party wall of the present building and the one adjoining it on the north, occupied by Hixons East. The estimated cost was \$2,200, and the contractor was Alfred Schmitt and Sons, Inc.
- k. 1964-65 (Nos. 83454, 124839): Electrical permits record changes in outlets and fixtures.

Very little of the original interior remains. The foyers on the second and third floors, most of the doors opening off these foyers, and the stairway connecting the two foyers appear to be original. On the second and third stories Small's building now opens into the block just south of it (built for James Curry, later part of the Pierce Building, now called the Arts Building, 700 North Milwaukee Street) and, on the ground floor, opens into the building on the north (originally the Daniel Brown block). On the exterior, the ground floor of the facade has seen repeated alteration, and the original cornice, an elaborate crested and bracketed affair, has been replaced by the present classicizing cornice. Thus only the second and third stories of the facade remain relatively unchanged, though it may be noted that the triple window in the south bay, third story, was changed to a double window when the interior partitions were modified. In 1960 the front was sandblasted. When the present owner acquired the block, the facade was painted dark gray with white and metallic copper-colored trim. At this writing, the lower portion of the facade--display windows and entrance to the Dreyer-Meyer firm--is again being remodelled. At unspecified dates the present heating system and electricity were installed.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: There are two fine early photos, both dating from c. 1872, in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, one of them in the photographic file, the other in the "Old Settler's Scrapbook," Fig. 174. Charles B. Harger published a drawing of small's building and its neighbors on Milwaukee Street c. 1874 in his Milwaukee Illustrated, Milwaukee, 1877, 71.

2. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Abstracts on the property prepared by Ogden and Pratt on January 31, 1869, by Pratt and Ogden on April 29, 1886, by Pratt and Ogden on April 30, 1886, by the Ogden Abstract and Title Co. on August 17, 1896, and by the Milwaukee Abstract and Title Co. on May 14, 1928--all in the collection of the present owner.

Building permits and other records, 1899-1965, General Office, Inspector of Buildings, 1010 Municipal Building, Milwaukee.

Inspection of the building August 7, 11, 13, and 14, 1969.

Interview with Michael Luntz, Irving Galleries, 400 East Wisconsin Avenue, August 7 and 11, 1969.

Milwaukee Sentinel Index, Local History Room, Milwaukee Public Library.

"Old Settlers' Scrapbook," in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Records of ownership, Records and Research, 509 City Hall, Milwaukee.

- b. Secondary and published sources:

"Another New Building," Milwaukee Sentinel, April 23, 1866, 1.

"Building Improvements," Milwaukee Sentinel, July 20, 1866, 1.

"Gas and Steam Fixtures," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 26, 1866, 1.

"The Growth of the Cream City of the Lakes," Milwaukee Sentinel, June 19, 1866, 1.

Harger, Charles B. (compiler), Milwaukee Illustrated, Milwaukee, 1877, 71.

Milwaukee Business Directory, 1867.

Milwaukee City Directory.

Perrin, Richard W. E., Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, 59, 61.

"Real Estate," Milwaukee Sentinel, April 16, 1874, 8.

"Removal," Milwaukee Sentinel, February 6, 1867, 1.

Unidentified clippings in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Prepared by Mary Ellen Wietczykowski
1111 North Astor Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
September 1, 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Erected in 1866, the Small Block is representative of the type of store fronts built in the city of Milwaukee from the 1860s to 1880s. Each building usually did not relate to its neighbor, nor were party walls common at this time. The three-story brick building with its brick quoins and Palladian-type windows on the upper floors reflects the Italianate influences of the latter half of the century.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. Presently the third floor is being remodelled.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building is three stories in height and has a width of 39 feet 7 inches. It is a

narrow rectangular structure. The first floor projects eastward to the rear beyond the upper floors. An "L" shaped addition has been attached to the projection. The building is now one of a row of store fronts on North Milwaukee Street.

2. Foundation: Brick foundation walls rest upon either brick or stone footings.
3. Wall construction: The walls are of Milwaukee cream-city pressed brick. The front facade of the second and third floors is divided vertically into three bays. Notable are the brick quoins at the outer edges of the front facade framing the outer bays. The first floor facade has been remodelled, and the brick work above is painted a dark blue-gray. The white ornate wooden projecting cornice with its small central pediment is not original.
4. Framing: Masonry bearing wall construction
5. Chimneys: None visible
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The original entry on the first floor has vanished. A new doorway opens to the street level shops. Access to the second and third floors is gained by entering the building to the south -- The Arts Building, 700 North Milwaukee Street. A short flight of steps connects the second floors of the two buildings and likewise another set of steps connects the third floors. There is a rear first floor panelled door set in a jack arch of header bricks.
 - b. Windows: On the second floor of the front facade both of the outer bays have Palladian-type windows, each consisting of two double-hung wooden windows, with one-over-one lights, flanking a central fixed sash. The center window is wider and all three have square heads. Above the windows is a Palladian motif stone lintel of dressed Wauwatosa stone. This lintel, with its central arch and horizontal arms, is supported by an iron plate and two cast-iron columns set in front of the window casings. The center bay contains a similar Palladian motif, though slightly smaller in height and framed with brick quoins. It frames a single solid brick panel that once held a sign.

The third floor outer bays have Palladian windows similar to the second floor, yet all windows are operable, one-over-one double-hung sashes with dressed stone sills. The window in the south bay has been altered. Two large double-hung, one-over-one wooden windows replace the triple window pattern. This was caused by division of the interior space during remodelling. The central bay has a Palladian motif lintel with its supporting cast iron framing a single double-hung one-over-one wooden window.

The third floor east (rear) of the building has seven double-hung wooden windows having one-over-one lights. The second floor has eight of these windows and the first-floor one-story projection has two double-hung wooden windows with six-over-nine lights. All of these windows have simple jack arches of header bricks.

7. Roof: The building has a flat built-up roof with two small skylights above the rooms on the north third of the building. There may be a similar pair of skylights on the south third of the building, but access to these rooms was not obtainable. The roof framing is of wood.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The building has a full basement with a doorway to the rear (east) into a stairwell formed between the "L" shaped addition and the main building. The first floor is not original.

The second floor foyer has four doorways opening into various compartmented rooms (offices) and the men's room. A small hallway and steps connect this floor with a lower second floor of the building to the south.

The third floor foyer has six doorways opening into various rooms. These include the ladies room and a suite. A portion of the third floor is now being remodelled and partitions torn out. There is access to the building on the south similar to that on the second floor.

2. Stairways: None exist today between the first and upper floors. The second and third floors are connected by a straight run of stairs (east and west) having a simple wooden railing and balusters.
3. Flooring: Wood which is now covered by carpeting in the foyers and linoleum and vinyl in the various offices.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The outside walls are plaster over brick while the interior walls are plaster over lath. Of note is the simulated stone block jointing of the plaster walls in the foyers.
5. Doorways and doors: Hardwood panelled doors with a single-translucent glass light. The doors have a single rectangular transom light of translucent glass. On each of the two upper floors there is a suite entrance doorway with side and transom lights of translucent glass. The doors are stained an opaque dark brown.
6. Trim: There is ornately moulded wide trim for the windows, with a similar narrower trim for the doors. The trim is stained an opaque dark brown.
7. Hardware: Cast-iron hinges. Knobs, locks, etc. have been replaced.
8. Lighting: Electric
9. Heating: Steam

D. Site:

The Small Block is one of a series of commercial buildings, each erected independently, that abut each other. The building is the second from the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and North Milwaukee Street. The building faces west on North Milwaukee and is bounded on the east by an alley and on the north and south by adjacent structures.

Prepared by John N. DeHaas, Jr.
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
August 15, 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1969 Milwaukee Project which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission of the City of Milwaukee, Richard W. E. Perrin, Chairman. The project was done under the direction of James C. Massey, then Chief of HABS, and the team members included architect John N. DeHaas, Jr. (Montana State University), Project Supervisor, Mary Ellen Wietczykowski--now Mary Ellen Young--(Milwaukee Landmarks Commission), Project Historian, and student

architects Larry Hermsen (Iowa State University), Roger Little (Kansas University), Thomas Sanford (Washington State University), and Donna Woodrum (Virginia Polytechnic Institute). The data was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS editors Carolyn R. Heath, Mary Farrell, Candace Reed and Philip Hamp. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack Boucher.